

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

CUBA: THE NEXT UNANTICIPATED ANTICIPATED STRATEGIC CRISIS?

by

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ABSTRACT

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Since the mid-1970s each administration has been surprised by a major unanticipated strategic crisis: Carter in Iran; Reagan in Central America; Bush in the Persian Gulf; Clinton in the Balkans and Africa; and the current Bush administration with the global war on terrorism (GWOT). Cuba, specifically post-Castro Cuba, could very well trigger the next unanticipated crisis even though the writing is on the wall. Fidel Castro is 78 years old, the current life expectancy of a Cuban male. When Castro dies, it is questionable whether his designated successor can hold power, so anarchy is a real possibility. The Cuban infrastructure and economy may implode with or without Castro. A power struggle in Cuba would have potentially significant effects on the Central and South American regions, requiring the U.S. to divert attention and resources from the GWOT to the region. Unfortunately, the U.S. does not have an appropriate policy approach to address such an obvious crisis. When the end of Castro's rule comes, the U.S. will likely take a "wait and see what happens" approach, and then respond as necessary to the crisis. What is needed is a policy that would promote a favorable post-Castro transition, thereby averting a Cuban and regional crisis. Such a proactive policy is fully consistent with the pre-emptive approach of the National Security Strategy. The U.S., the region, and the rest of the world would benefit from such a visionary policy.

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CUBA: THE NEXT UNANTICIPATED ANTICIPATED STRATEGIC CRISIS?

The end of the Cold War in 1989 closed the door on one of the most perilous times in the history of mankind. The euphoria felt by the free world as the Soviet Union and the United States dismantled their nuclear arsenals promoted a false sense of security that the world would somehow be safer. This optimism was reinforced by the establishment of emerging democracies in countries throughout the former Warsaw Pact and much of the rest of the Soviet sphere of influence. Unfortunately, during the Cold War and in the time since, each U.S. administration has been surprised by a major unanticipated strategic crisis and Cuba could very well trigger the next unanticipated crisis. Fidel Castro is 78 years old, the current life expectancy of a Cuban male. When Castro dies, anarchy could very well engulf Cuba. A power struggle in Cuba could have significant effects on the Central and South America regions, requiring the U.S. to divert resources from the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) to stabilize the region. In the meantime the Cuban infrastructure and economy may implode. The U.S. does not have an appropriate policy approach to address such an obvious crisis. When the end of Castro's rule comes, the U.S. will likely take a "wait and see what happens" approach-and then respond. What is needed is a proactive policy that would promote a favorable post-Castro transition, thereby averting a Cuban and regional crisis. Such a policy is consistent with the pre-emptive approach of the National Security Strategy. The U.S., the region, and the rest of the world would benefit from such a forward-looking policy.

PERILS OF THE UNKNOWN

On New Year's Eve 1977, during a state dinner in Teheran, Iran, President Jimmy Carter raised his glass and toasted the Shah of Iran. The sins of the Shah's rise to power were forgiven, and the authority of his autocratic government was recognized as legitimate by the U.S.¹ The Shah was a loyal friend of the U.S., and Iran provided a stabilizing western anchor in the troubled Middle East region. President Carter could not imagine, nor did he anticipate, that in less than two years the Shah would be in exile, the Ayatollah Khomeini would rule Iran, and militants would seize the American Embassy and hold 66 Americans hostage. This event virtually paralyzed Carter's ability to lead and govern both at home and abroad for the last 444 days of his administration.² It could be argued that it cost Carter the 1980 election, stymied the American economy, and raised serious questions regarding the U.S. military and diplomatic elements of power at the height of the post-Vietnam Cold War Era.³

As in the Teheran crisis, other recent Presidents, despite highly effective national security advisors or their self-proclaimed personal understanding of the world, are more often than not

unable to anticipate pending crises. President Ronald Reagan did not anticipate the challenges in Central America, President George H.W. Bush did not plan on fighting the first Gulf War, and President Bill Clinton did not foresee the extent of U.S. involvement in Africa and the Balkans. Beyond 9/11, are there unanticipated crises awaiting the current administration or the next? While there is considerable debate regarding this and much effort is expended by numerous think tanks on the subject, there is most assuredly one crisis that the U.S. will be forced to confront – Cuba. Cuba in itself is not a new problem for the U.S.; however, a post-Castro Cuba may well be the most unanticipated anticipated crisis in the near future. Everyone knows that it is coming but little policy thought has been given it – it is treated as an “unanticipated” anticipated crisis. In the backdrop of the (GWOT), the U.S. must become more deliberate and refined in anticipating situations that threaten the nation’s vital interests, and Cuba is one crisis that can be proactively affected.

HISTORY

To understand the current U.S. policy toward Cuba, it is necessary to briefly summarize Cuban history and the events that led to the present state of relations between the two countries. Cuba seems to always have been on the brink of independence. Rich in culture and resources and strategically placed geographically, the island nation struggled to find a national identity through centuries of Spanish colonial rule. In 1898 the Spanish relinquished control of Cuba under the provisions of the Paris Peace Treaty that ended the Spanish-American War. On 20 May 1902, the U.S. granted Cuba nominal independence only after Congress had defined the future of U.S.-Cuban relations.⁴ For Cuba, however, independence has been an elusive ideal, while the meddling of the U.S., and Cuba’s inability to unite as a nation, derailed any hope for “real” democracy to take a foothold. In the early part of the 20th century, the Platt Amendment gave the U.S. the right to intervene in Cuban affairs in order to preserve independence and stability on the island nation.⁵ In 1934 the Platt Amendment was repealed and the U.S. and Cuba signed a Treaty of Relations whereby the U.S. obtained Guantanamo Base, which has since been a key strategic holding for the U.S.

Cuba’s independence was turbulent at best throughout the 20th century. The country was often ruled by authoritarian and military figures, so it never realized true independence. These regimes were economically dependent on the U.S. economy and business interests which favored stability over democracy. The last of these regimes was that of Fulgencio Batista who came to power through a coup in 1940. The Batista government was riddled with corruption and limited the civil liberties of the populace. On 1 January 1959, Batista fled Cuba under

pressure from opposition from the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel Castro. Castro promised to return the country to constitutional rule and democratic elections as he used the Cuban military to consolidate his power. Thus began Castro's 45 years of authoritarian rule that suppressed liberty, eliminated dissent, and caused hundreds of thousands of Cubans to flee the island.⁶ On 16 April 1961, Castro declared Cuba a socialist state; for the next 30 years, he pursued close relations with the Soviet Union. The Cuban regime proceeded to expropriate U.S. properties and inexorably adopted a one party communist system. The U.S. imposed an embargo on Cuba in October 1960 and broke diplomatic relations on 3 January 1961.⁷ Castro's promised reforms never materialized.

Since the early 1960s, U.S. policy toward Cuba has been consistent with the overall Cold War policy of containment. There have been frequent tense and hostile confrontations between the U.S. and Cuba: The 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, an American supported attempt to overthrow the Castro government; the 1962 Cuban missile crisis; Cuban insurgencies in Africa and the Western Hemisphere; the large refugee migrations in the 80s and 90s; the 1996 Cuban fighters' shooting down of two U.S. civilian planes;⁸ and in April 2003, the harsh sentencing of 75 Cuban opposition members to prison for publishing anti-government material, organizing petition drives and meeting to discuss the future of Cuba.⁹ The U.S. aggressively and persistently imposed an economic embargo and comprehensive sanctions on Cuba. Given the tumultuous relationship between the two countries and the backdrop of the Cold War, these actions were wholly consistent with US policy toward other communist countries throughout the world.

In the early 1990s, the fall of the Soviet Union and communism changed the strategic landscape. Initially, the U.S. believed Cuba was so weakened and isolated that it would fall naturally, just as its communist counterparts did in Eastern Europe. There were periods that allowed limited travel and the trade of some food and medicine. However, when this failed to materialize, the U.S., seeking to resolve the Cuban issue and to complete the rout of communism, vigorously accelerated its Cuban sanction policy and strengthened the policy with Congressional legislation. Again U.S. policy failed to topple the regime.

The U.S. entered a new phase of its Cuban policy in the mid 1990s. To achieve the objective of toppling the Castro regime, the U.S. imposed stricter trade and travel restrictions. The Helms-Burton Act of 1996, the harshest of numerous Congressional legislative actions, solidified this aggressive posture through law followed the civilian aircraft shoot down. This 1996 Act has been called a present day Platt Amendment.¹⁰ It grants U.S. citizens, whose properties were seized by Castro, the right to sue in U.S. courts foreign companies and citizens

“trafficking” in that property.¹¹ This legislation was designed to build an anti-Cuban coalition by pressuring allies and trading partners to avoid trade with Cuba. But the legislation has had an opposite effect; instead of curbing Cuban trade, it has created resentment toward the U.S. It also has raised concerns regarding U.S. presumption of authority, since the U.S. Congress appears to be legislating international law.¹²

Any assessment of the history of U.S.-Cuban policy must look closely at Fidel Castro's persona. Castro appears as perhaps the most tenacious enemy that the U.S. has ever faced or so the record of U.S. policy would suggest. For nearly half a century, he has defied U.S. policies and frustrated U.S. attempts to overthrow his regime, diverting strategic resources and expending untold U.S. political and diplomatic capital. Current and past U.S. leaders and policy-makers argue that Castro has sought to thwart all U.S.-Cuban policies. In their view, he is a brutal dictator whose cruelty to his people is unsurpassed, and that he is beyond reason because he is hopelessly committed to communist philosophy. On the face of it, there is much truth in these latter assessments, yet Castro remains in power and U.S. policy remains ineffective. In a strange paradox the more the U.S. attempts to overthrow Castro, the more the majority of domestic Cubans support him. In the eyes of many Cubans, Castro stands between them and historical U.S. exploitation and he has helped the Cuban people. His literacy campaign has caused illiteracy to drop from 20% to 4%, which now equals the U.S. literacy rate.¹³ Radio and television beam educational programs to supplement schools and universities. Women make up about half of Cuba's university and medical school students. Cuba's infant mortality rate is equal to the U.S. rate of 7 per 1,000 births. Its HIV/AIDS rate is less than 1/6th of the U.S., and Cuba sends doctors all over the world to help in apparent genuine solidarity. Cuba's life expectancy is equal to the U.S. at 77 years. Former U.S. Surgeon General Joceyln Elders toured Cuban medical facilities in 2001 and found the Cuban health system eclipsing the American system in many ways with regard to care, access, and effectiveness.¹⁴ Equally true, the more the U.S. attempts to punish Castro, the more it adversely affects the Cuban people and the post Castro transition.

PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT POLICY

Cuba presents the U.S. with a unique challenge. U.S. policy makers have allowed their animosity toward Castro (or Castro's animosity toward the U.S.) to cloud policy decisions. During the Cold War, U.S. isolation of Cuba was appropriate because Cuba was indeed a threat to U.S. interests. For the U.S., isolating Cuba through sanctions and employing covert activities to undermine the Castro regime were among the ways that the U.S. was pursuing its Cold War

ends. When the Soviet Union fell, Cuba lost heavily. Gone were significant foreign aid and an essential trading partner; the collapse of communism left Cuba literally alone among the few remaining isolated Communist regimes in the world. However, Cuba was a different communist regime. Unlike the regimes in Eastern Europe, Castro had no real political opposition, at least none at the level of the Solidarity movement in Poland and the Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia.¹⁵ Cuba's dissident community was not well established within the country or among the exiles and no obvious leader has emerged. Further, the Castro regime was not imposed by the Soviet Union, as in countries behind the Iron Curtain.¹⁶ The U.S. erroneously assumed that with the loss of Soviet support Cuba would collapse. In fact, Castro enjoys immense popularity among many Cubans for replacing the unpopular Batista government and recognizing the plight of the common man.

A primary fault in the present U.S. Cuba policy is that it is centered on Fidel Castro and ignores the need to build a positive relationship with the Cuban people. U.S. narrow-mindedness has negated the ability to recognize that Fidel Castro is unlike other despots. He is not isolated and has freely traveled throughout this hemisphere and the world expounding his beliefs. He has a substantial audience both in his country and abroad. In the Americas, he has fueled his revolutionary rhetoric by attacking the U.S. and aligning himself with revolutionary martyrs like Che Guevara and Simon Bolivar. These martyrs appeal to the populist ideology of a great number of Cubans and Latin Americans, as does Castro, as symbols for anti-Americanism. An uneven distribution of wealth continues throughout the region and the effects of dire poverty are endured by much of the population. Therefore, Castro's Cuban Revolution and Communist manifesto oratory still have appeal, if for no other reason than Castro has stood up to the U.S. Furthermore, the U.S. prosecution of the war in Iraq, coupled with its trade policies and inconsistent support throughout the region, has yielded low U.S. approval ratings among Latin and South American peoples.¹⁷ Yet policy makers continue to resist a positive approach on Cuba.

On 19 May 2002, President Bush clarified general U.S. policy: "Full normalization of relations with Cuba - diplomatic recognition, open trade and a robust aid program - will only be possible when the human rights of all Cubans are fully protected. Yet under the initiative for a new Cuba, the U.S. recognizes that freedom sometimes grows step by step - and we will encourage those steps."¹⁸ On 10 October 2003, the President announced the creation of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. He then reaffirmed the objectives of the U.S. policy toward Cuba:

- End the ruthless and brutal dictatorship

- Assist the Cuban people in a transition to representative democracy
- Assist the Cuban people in establishing a free market economy

To achieve these objectives, the President charged the Commission to identify:

- Additional measures to help the Cuban people bring an end to the dictatorship
- Elements of a plan for agile, effective and decisive assistance to a post-dictatorship Cuba.¹⁹

By characterizing the Castro regime as ruthless and brutal and making the absence of Castro as the head of the Cuban government, the U.S. returned to a hardened policy reminiscent of Cold War-era Cuban policy.

The Commission, headed by then Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel Martinez, submitted a report to the President on 6 May 2004. Acting on the report's recommendations, President Bush supported committing up to \$59 million over the next two years to hasten the end of the Cuban dictatorship. This funding would support democracy-building activities; support family members of the political opposition; and support efforts to help youth, women, and Afro-Cubans take their rightful place in the pro-democracy movement. The administration's plan also allocates \$18 million toward breaking Cuba's information blockade. This funding would provide for regular airborne TV and radio transmissions into Cuba. Finally, \$5 million would be spent for public diplomatic efforts abroad to draw attention to Castro's human rights abuses, as well as his terrorist and espionage activities.²⁰ The administration feels that these efforts can be buttressed by eliminating abuses in trade and travel programs. Accepting the Commission's report and recommendations, President Bush said, "We believe the people of Cuba should be free from tyranny. We believe the future of Cuba is a future of freedom. It's in our nation's interest that Cuba be free. It's in the neighborhood's interest that Cuba be free. More importantly, it's in the interest of the Cuban people that they be free from tyranny." ²¹ The President's words and the administration's actions echo Cold War strategies and are entirely focused on collapsing Castro's regime. While expressing a desire for a "free" Cuba, the policy does nothing to improve the lot of the Cuban people and little to facilitate a transition from communism to a free society.

The key policy question that the U.S. should focus on is what happens when Castro expires? Basically there are three distinct groups of Cubans: those living in Cuba, Cuban-Americans and Cubans dispersed throughout other parts of the Americas. In Cuba there are 11 million Cubans,²² who, at least tacitly, accept Castro and his revolution. Conversely, it is fair to assume that some within Cuba and many who have immigrated to other countries in the Western Hemisphere do not. After forty plus years of his autocratic rule, there are those who

will attempt to perpetuate the revolution to preserve their status and perks. On the other hand Castro has eliminated much of the opposition to the government within the country by executing or confining opponents to prison. Orderly succession is an issue. Castro has reportedly said, “après moi, les deluges (after me, chaos).”²³ That said, however, there are several succession possibilities. Castro’s brother Raul, who is five years younger than Fidel, is the heir apparent to lead Cuba after Castro, assuming he survives his brother. More recently his son Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart, a nuclear energy expert and cousin of U.S. Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart (D-FL), has become more visible. Cuba’s economic czar, Carlos Lage, and the president of the National Assembly of the People Power, Ricardo Alarcon, have emerged as potential post-Castro leaders as well.²⁴ Cuban military leaders also enjoy the economic and social spoils of Castro’s despotic system, so an Army general could conceivably rise to power.²⁵ Whoever comes after Castro will not likely possess the charisma or be the national icon that Castro proved, and may be easier to work with. Could a shift in U.S. policy begin to engage any of these possible successors to Castro?

Regardless of the succession, under the current U.S. policy, Cuba’s problems of a post Castro transformation only worsen. In addition to Cubans on the island, there will be those in exile who will return claiming authority. And there are remnants of the dissident community within Cuba who will attempt to exercise similar authority. A power vacuum or absence of order will create the conditions for instability and civil war. Whether Raul or another successor from within the current government can hold power is debatable. However, that individual will nonetheless extend the current policies for an indefinite period, which will only compound the Cuban situation. When Cuba finally collapses anarchy is a strong possibility if the U.S. maintains the “wait and see” approach. The U.S. then must deal with an unstable country 90 miles off its coast. In the midst of this chaos, thousands will flee the island. During the Mariel boatlift in 1980 125,000 fled the island.²⁶ Many were criminals; this time the number could be several hundred thousand fleeing to the U.S., creating a refugee crisis.

Equally important, by adhering to a negative containment policy, the U.S. may be creating its next series of transnational criminal problems. Cuba is along the axis of the drug-trafficking flow into the U.S. from Columbia. The Castro government as a matter of policy does not support the drug trade. In fact, Cuba’s actions have shown that its stance on drugs is more than hollow rhetoric as indicated by its increasing seizure of drugs – 7.5 tons in 1995, 8.8 tons in 1999, and 13 tons in 2000.²⁷ While there may be individuals within the government and outside who engage in drug trafficking and a percentage of drugs entering the U.S. may pass through Cuba, the Cuban government is not the path of least resistance for the flow of drugs. If there

were no Cuban restraints, the flow of drugs to the U.S. could be greatly facilitated by a Cuba base of operation and accelerate considerably.

In the midst of an unstable Cuba, the opportunity for radical fundamentalist groups to operate in the region increases. If these groups can export terrorist activity from Cuba to the U.S. or throughout the hemisphere then the war against this extremism gets more complicated. Such activity could increase direct attacks and disrupt the economies, threatening the stability of the fragile democracies that are budding throughout the region. In light of a failed state in the region, the U.S. may be forced to deploy military forces to Cuba, creating the conditions for another insurgency. The ramifications of this action could very well fuel greater anti-American sentiment throughout the Americas. A proactive policy now can mitigate these potential future problems.

U.S. domestic political support is also turning against the current negative policy. The Cuban American population in the U.S. totals 1,241,685 or 3.5% of the population.²⁸ Most of these exiles reside in Florida; their influence has been a factor in determining the margin of victory in the past two presidential elections. But this election strategy may be flawed, because recent polls of Cuban Americans reflect a decline for President Bush based on his policy crackdown. There is a clear softening in the Cuban-American community with regard to sanctions. Younger Cuban Americans do not necessarily subscribe to the hard-line approach. These changes signal an opportunity for a new approach to U.S.-Cuban relations. (Table 1)

Percentage of Cuban-Americans in south Florida who:	1991	2004
Oppose tightening the embargo	13.6	34.0
Support establishing a national dialogue	39.8	55.6
Would oppose an exile invasion of Cuba	23.7	39.8
Support allowing food sales to Cuba	23.4	54.8
Oppose the U.S. ban on business in Cuba	38.4*	51.1
*1997		
Source: Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, Miami Florida ²⁹		

TABLE 1. THE RISE OF CUBAN-AMERICAN MODERATES

The time has come to look realistically at the Cuban issue. Castro will rule until he dies. The only issue is what happens then? The U.S. can little afford to be distracted by a failed state 90 miles off its coast. The administration, given the present state of world affairs, does not have the luxury or the resources to pursue the traditional American model of crisis management. The President and other government and military leaders have warned that the GWOT will be long and protracted. These warnings were sounded when the administration did not anticipate operations in Iraq consuming so many military, diplomatic and economic resources. There is

justifiable concern that Africa and the Caucasus region are potential hot spots for terrorist activity, so these areas should be secure. North Korea will continue to be an unpredictable crisis in waiting. We also cannot ignore China. What if China resorts to aggression to resolve the Taiwan situation? Will the U.S. go to war over Taiwan? Additionally, Iran could conceivably be the next target for U.S. pre-emptive action. These are known and potential situations that could easily require all or many of the elements of national power to resolve. In view of such global issues, can the U.S. afford to sustain the status quo and simply let the Cuban situation play out? The U.S. is at a crossroads: should the policies of the past 40 years remain in effect with vigor? Or should the U.S. pursue a new approach to Cuba in an effort to facilitate a manageable transition to post-Castro Cuba?

ANALYSIS OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The U.S. can pursue three policy alternatives in dealing with Cuba:

SUSTAIN THE CURRENT POLICY AND FULLY ENFORCE THE ECONOMIC EMBARGO

The crux of the argument for this policy is that sanctions and other restrictions will exert tremendous pressure on the Castro regime, in hope that the regime will fall prior to Castro's death. There is little indication that this policy will succeed. The U.S. is virtually the only country pursuing a policy to isolate Cuba. In the 1990s Castro was able to develop new trade and markets. While Cuba is not a prosperous country, it has nonetheless managed to endure. The loss of Soviet subsidies, which amounted to 25% of Cuba's national income, and the loss of the Eastern European bloc as trading partners, which amounted to 75% of Cuba's import/export trade, left Castro with no alternative but to implement economic changes both internally and externally.³⁰ These initiatives have stimulated steady, but modest, economic growth.

Today in Cuba, 160,000 people (or 4% of the workforce) are self-employed.³¹ These entrepreneurial endeavors include small restaurants, taxi drivers, repairmen, and other service industries. If the present course of sanctions continues, the gains of these small reforms will be suppressed leading to significant deprivation for the people involved. Also, Cuba trades with over 100 countries worldwide, so while trade with the U.S. would certainly improve Cuba's economic well-being, it is debatable whether the lack of U.S. trade is bringing the regime to its knees. The point is that sanctions are not hurting Castro, but are hurting the Cuban population. Restricting trade and travel hurts the small businesses, the tourist industry and others whose livelihood depends on a service economy. It also degrades the quality of life of those Cubans whose financial support comes from family members in the U.S.

Strategists who subscribe to current policy argue that these limitations/hardships will eventually promote an uprising among the populace to overthrow Castro. There is no substantial evidence that this will occur and much that argues against it. While Castro will not live forever, he has outlasted over 45 years of such U.S. policy. He is 78 years old and his father lived to be 80 under significantly less desirable conditions.³² If the present policy course is to wait Castro out this could potentially take another 5-10 years. The wait equates to 5-10 years of despair for the Cuban people, further decay of the country's infrastructure and more dire conditions that would make democratic reform all the more difficult and costly when Castro actually expires.

Pursuing the present steady state policy will further alienate the Cuban people at home and abroad. The U.S. often has a myopic vision in regard to other cultures. In the case of Cuba, by focusing only on Castro and ignoring the Cuban peoples' culture and traditions, U.S. policy makers are blinded and have failed to see a future Cuba.

RETAIN SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA, BUT ENFORCE THEM IN VARYING DEGREES DEPENDING ON THE POLITICAL CLIMATE AND THE CUBAN REGIME'S CONDUCT IN REGARD TO AMERICAN INTERESTS

Throughout the past 15 years, the U.S. has experimented with a variable enforcement option. During the Clinton administration, restrictions were occasionally eased. For example, in March 1998, President Clinton announced: 1) the resumption of licensing for direct humanitarian charter flights to Cuba; 2) the resumption of cash remittances up to \$300 per quarter for the support of close relatives in Cuba; 3) the development of licensing procedures to streamline and expedite licenses for the commercial sale of medicines and medical supplies and equipment; and 4) a decision to work on a bipartisan basis with Congress on the transfer of food to the Cuban people.³³ In January 1999, President Clinton ordered additional measures to assist the Cuban people, which included further easement of cash remittances, expansion of direct passenger charter flights to Cuba, reestablishment of direct mail service, authorization for the commercial sale of food to independent entities in Cuba, and an expansion of people-to-people exchanges (i.e. scientist, students, athletes, etc.)³⁴ This policy ended when the new administration failed to see any reciprocal progress from Castro.

Fragmenting the policy process may do more harm than good. It does too little too late and causes hard feelings among Cubans and American businesses. The carrot-stick diplomatic approach will not make Castro yield. Such policy breeds inconsistency as it can vary from administration to administration, as it has between the Clinton and Bush administrations. The

rules constantly change and thus have a ripple effect on American businesses and the quality of life of Americans, Cuban-Americans and native Cubans.

Cuban trade has already declined to a trickle since the Bush administration sought to further squeeze the Castro government. Prior to the Bush administration's trade crack down, 2004 was emerging as a record year for U.S. imports to Cuba. By the end of December 2004 U.S. suppliers and shippers were projected to have earned some \$450 million, a 20% increase over 2003 sales.³⁵ Imposing restrictions, as the Bush administration did in June 2004, perplexed American businesses with unpredicted problems. These businesses make adjustments, as do Cuban- American citizens, then must abruptly alter their business strategies because of a Congressional vote or an Executive order. This political tug-of-war does not move the U.S. any closer to realizing its security objectives.

On the Cuban American front there is eroding support for this U.S. policy position. In the 2000 presidential election, President Bush won 81% of south Florida's Cuban-American vote. A recent poll by the William C. Veleasquez Institute-Miramir Global indicates that his support today has fallen to 66%.³⁶ This decline signals a negative response to policy that limits travel, restricts the amount of goods people can bring to their relatives, and places limitations on sending money to family in Cuba. Cuban-Americans believe that this only hurts their poor relatives in Cuba. According to Jose Basulto, head of Brothers to the Rescue, and Ramon Raul Sanchez, head of the anti-Castro Democracy Movement, the U.S. government is using the Cuban people to harass Castro.³⁷ Applying policy in a give-and-take manner, accomplishes little to facilitate the fall of Castro. The Cuban people enjoy brief periods of limited benefits, only to have these benefits withdrawn should the President or members of Congress wish to take another jab at Castro. American civilian businesses are also negatively affected.

LIFT ALL SANCTIONS AND PURSUE NORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA

Normalcy is the only policy that the U.S. has not attempted. The present policy misses the security implications, alienates allies and others worldwide, harms U.S. businesses, and is losing support domestically. First, the U.S. must reassess the threat posed by Cuba. There is, in fact, virtually no security threat. Further, policies that were applicable in the past, when there was a threat, should not be applied to the current environment. The U.S. Cuban policy is perplexing because it appears to conflict with the ends, ways and means that the National Security Strategy is applied in other regions of the world. The U.S. has normalized relations with Vietnam and Libya and has certainly opted for an open dialogue with Communist China.

Likewise, there is abundant evidence that a new policy toward Cuba could very well achieve the ends that 43 years of embargo have failed to accomplish.

Secondly, Cuba currently trades and has diplomatic ties with much of the world. The goal of U.S. sanctions is to isolate the Cuban regime; however, they have only slowed, not deterred economic growth. On 4 November 2003 the United Nations voted, for the 12th straight year, 173 to 3 (with 4 abstentions) against the four-decade U.S. embargo against Cuba.³⁸ Voting with the U.S. were Israel and the Marshall Islands. The U.S.' staunchest allies, the 15 members of the European Union, along with Japan, Australia and New Zealand, all object to the "extra-territorial" effect of U.S. legislation that they feel violates their sovereignty.³⁹ There are two schools of thought regarding trade and democracy. The first is that economic growth will promote democracy. The other questions this notion and argues that democracy must come first.⁴⁰ There is strong opinion, however, that in Cuba's case economic engagement will bring about the desired results. Certainly many Cuban-Americans and perhaps some others in the world would not agree with this course of action. However, there is evidence that a significant number of people both within the U.S. and abroad favor a policy change. In 1992 a pastoral letter from Cuba's Bishops stated that the US embargo "directly affects the people who suffer the consequences in hunger and illness. If what is intended by this approach is to destabilize the government by using hunger and want to pressure civic society to revolt, then the strategy is also cruel."⁴¹

The third consideration is U.S. business. Under the current rules, U.S. businesses are permitted to sell agricultural produce to Cuba.⁴² Today 27 firms from 12 U.S. states are doing business with Cuba, making Cuba 22nd among U.S. agricultural markets.⁴³ These business activities are greatly influenced by Cuban-Americans and members of Congress. The economic power of the U.S. can be our most powerful weapon. The possibilities of economic engagement offer a myriad of branches and sequels that could promote a rapport between the American people and the Cubans. The aggressive pursuit of these endeavors would go far in ensuring an orderly transition to a post-Castro Cuba. It is an erroneous assumption to believe that Castro's demise will miraculously trigger reform and all the problems of the last 40 years will vanish. A visionary policy, albeit constrained within the parameters of the Castro regime, will go far in setting agreeable social-economic conditions in Cuba both now and in the future.

Finally, public opinion in the U.S. favors a new policy direction. A 1997 Miami Herald poll found that a majority of Cubans under the age of 45 supported "establishing a national dialogue with Cuba," whereas for the most part their elders opposed such dialogue.⁴⁴ Former President Jimmy Carter, writing in the *Washington Post* after his May 2002 visit to Cuba, reported that he

found an unexpected degree of economic freedom. Carter went on to say that if Americans could have maximum contact with Cuban, then Cubans would clearly see the advantages of a truly democratic society and thus be encouraged to bring about orderly changes in their society.⁴⁵ Castro himself appears willing to consider greater reform. In 1998 he permitted Pope John Paul II to visit Cuba; Cubans are permitted to own property; he has opened trade; and in 2002 he broadcast former President Jimmy Carter's address at the University of Havana.⁴⁶ Additionally, he indicated that the Cuban government would return any of the Guantanamo detainees in the unlikely event that they would escape.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

U.S. policy makers need to confront the real Cuba of today in order to build a "free" Cuba of tomorrow that is capable of taking its place in the world community as a responsible, democratic nation. Given the history of the past 100 years, and particularly our Castro centric policy, the U.S. needs to make a bold change toward Cuba. The U.S. has pursued a hard-line approach toward the Castro regime for over 40 years. While this policy was easily justified during the Cold War era and, to a certain degree, during the 1990s, it fails to address the present U.S. national security concerns. The globalization trends of the 21st century are irreversible, Fidel Castro is in the twilight of his life, and a new generation of Cuban-Americans is supportive of new strategies that will ease the transition to a post-Castro Cuba while buttressing economic and social opportunities in the near term. Furthermore, there is a new dimension that U.S. policy strategists must take into account in deciding the course of U.S.-Cuba relations – the GWOT. World-wide asymmetrical threats to U.S. interests, coupled with the Iraqi occupation and the potential for any one of the present hot spots (i.e. Iran, North Korea, Taiwan, etc.) to ignite, should prompt strategic leaders to work harder to mitigate a potential Caribbean crises. The prudent action would then be to develop strategies that can defuse or neutralize these situations before they require the U.S. to divert resources from protecting its interests in the GWOT.

Therefore, the U.S. can best serve its security, the Cuban people, and the Western Hemisphere by abandoning the present draconian policy toward Cuba. The U.S. should implement a new policy designed to achieve its goals through lifting all sanctions and pursuing normalized diplomatic relations; encouraging people-to-people dialogue and trade. The policy should continue to pursue human rights, democracy, and free market ends. However, the ways to realize these objectives should be grounded in full economic engagement, an approach that

has not been fully attempted. The present U.S. policy has failed miserably. What does the most powerful nation on earth have to lose by attempting a bold shift in its policy toward Cuba?

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ENDNOTES

¹ S. Mintz, "No Islands of Stability, Period 1970s," Digital History; available from <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=403> Internet; accessed 10 January 2005.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jamie Suchlicki, *Cuba from Columbus to Castro and Beyond* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's 2002), 71-72.

⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁶ U.S. Department of State, "Cuba Profile-August 2004," Released by Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs; available from <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/c2461.htm>> ; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004, 4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Suchlicki, 232-255.

⁹ George W. Bush, "President Bush Discusses Cuban Policy in Rose Garden Speech;" 10 October 2003; Released by the White House; available from <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/25154pf.htm>>; Internet; accessed 16 September 2004.

¹⁰ William Ratliff, "Surviving Fidel" *Hoover Digest*, no.1 (2004); available from <http://www.hooverdigest.org/past_issues.html>; Internet; accessed 1 December 2004.

¹¹ Mark P. Sullivan and Maureen Taft-Morales, *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress; Cuba: Issues for Congress* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Library of Congress, 1 February 2002), 10.

¹² Phillip Peters, *A Policy Toward Cuba That Serves U.S. Interests; Policy Analysis – The Cato Institute* (Washington D.C.: Cato Institute, 2 November 2000), 11

¹³ Nicolai Brown, "Cuban Sanctions Prove Both Inhumane, Ineffective," Released by Digital Granma International; available from <<http://www.granma.cu/ingles/2004/junio/jue10/99iowa.html>>; Internet; accessed 8 October 2004, 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Peters, 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Daniel P. Erickson.. "Castro and Latin America: A Second Wind?" *World Policy Journal* 21 (Spring 2004); 35.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, "President Bush Announces Initiative for a New Cuba," 19 May 2002; available from <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/10323.htm>>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004, 1.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Fact Sheet: Report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba," Released by the White House; available from <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020520-2.html>>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004, 1.

²⁰ Ibid., 1-2.

²¹ George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President after Meeting with the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba;" Released by the White House; available from <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040506-4.html>>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004, 1.

²² Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book: Cuba"; available from <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html>>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004.

²³ Chris Marquis, "Dark Days Ahead?" *Hoover Digest*, no.2 (2003); available from <http://www.hooverdigest.org/past_issues.html>; Internet; accessed 1 December 2004.

²⁴ Javier Corrales, "Cuba after Fidel," *Current History, A Journal of Contemporary Affairs*, no.679 (2005): 69.

²⁵ Ibid., 74.

²⁶ Sullivan, 6.

²⁷ Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, *Unfinished Business: America and Cuba after the Cold War, 1989-2001* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 187.

²⁸ "U.S. Census 2000," Released by the Department of Commerce; available from <<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/dp1/2kh00.pdf>>; Internet; accessed 8 October 2004, 1.

²⁹ Corrales, 72.

³⁰ Peters, 2.

³¹ Sullivan and Taft-Morales, 3.

³² Peters, 2.

³³ Sullivan and Taft-Morales, 6-7.

³⁴ Ibid, 7.

³⁵ Sean Federico-O'Murchu, and Mary Murray, "Top Cuban Says U.S. Farmers May Suffer Losses," Released by MSNBC and NBC News; available from

<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6173471/print/1/displaymode/1098/>>; Internet; accessed 4 October 2004, 1.

³⁶ Tamara Lush and David Adams, "Bush's Cuban-American Support Slips," *The St. Petersburg Times*, 27 August 2004; available from <http://www.sptimes.com/2004/08/27/news_pf/Decision2004/Bush_s_Cuban_American.sht>; Internet; accessed 8 October 2004, 1.

³⁷ Ibid., 2.

³⁸ Evelyn Leopold, "Record UN Vote against US Embargo on Cuba," Reuters, 4 November 2003; Released by the Global Policy Forum; available from <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/sanction/cuba/unvote/1104embargo.htm>>; Internet; accessed 8 October 2004, 1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Joseph T. Siegle, Michael M. Weinstein, and Morton H. Halperin. "Why Democracies Excel," *Foreign Affairs*; no 5 (2004): 57.

⁴¹ Peters, 5.

⁴² Corrales, 73.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Peters, 5.

⁴⁵ Jimmy Carter, "Openings to Cuba: We Must Find a Common Ground," *The Washington Post*, 24 May 2002, Released by the Carter Center; available from <<http://www.cartercenter.org/viewdoc.asp?docID=563&submenu=news>>; Internet; accessed 9 October 2004, 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sullivan, 22.

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